



LIFELINK

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Suicide First Aid—Are You Willing to ASIST?

By Mass Communication Specialist 1st Class Jeremy Starr, Defense Media Activity

On the outside, it looked like any other Navy vessel moored to a pier; haze gray and resting on crystal blue waters. A light shower poured out of a bright blue sky, but Sailors didn't seem to mind. However, inside the ship, a whole other storm was brewing.

Just a few hours earlier, a Sailor and shipmate at my command in Guam died by suicide. At first, that day seemed like any other to all those who knew him. A day like any other with Sailors focused on their jobs as this Sailor made his way to the armory to arm up for his watch. Everything seemed to be going like clockwork. And just like that, the clock stopped.

Growing up as a kid, suicide was the furthest thing from my mind. If at any time it did cross my mind, I knew for certain I could never go through with it. I knew even during the toughest of times, there were options for me beyond death. As a religious man, my faith has always served as a strong protective factor for me.

At the same time, I didn't want any family member, friend or Sailor around me to feel like suicide was an option, so I chose to assist with suicide prevention at my command.

The first step was to attend the Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training or **ASIST**, a two-day **LivingWorks** education course for anyone 16 or older, regardless of prior experience, who wants to be able to provide suicide first aid.

I had no idea what to expect from the class. As I approached the chapel doors my mind drifted back to my second duty station in San Diego. I was TAD to an auxiliary security force in Point Loma. I met a girl who regularly harmed herself. I was unsure what to do, so I told the command and asked her to pray to stay alive. The command and chaplain were aware and were handling the situation.

Last year while at my current command, I was on my first barracks watch when a young man asked me for the chaplain's number. I gave it to him and asked if everything was alright. He said yes, so I gave him the number and went back to my duties.

Several hours later two different Sailors came up to me and said they thought the young male from earlier was thinking about suicide. I brought him into the room and sat down with him to ask what was wrong. He was going to be transferred to his first station soon and he wasn't handling the news too well.

And just last month, I was overseas for an assignment with two Sailors from my command to interview a chaplain for a story we were covering. We were delayed in interviewing the chaplain who was responding to the loss of a Sailor who had died by suicide the night before.

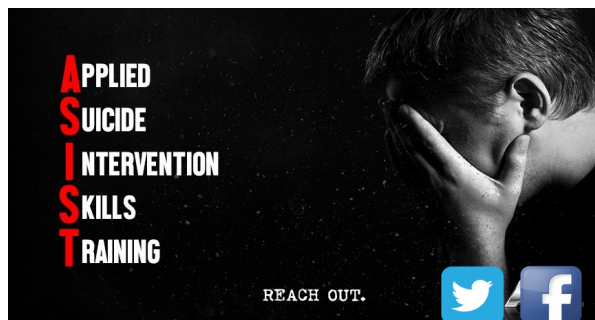
These scenarios weren't isolated to one duty station or one type of person. They spanned my entire career from east to west coasts and overseas. I know suicide affects many people. I met 27 of those people when I entered into the classroom.

The class offered all of the things we have all come to love from these types of trainings; surveys, statistics and videos. However, when we broke up into smaller groups to discuss questions and emotions related to suicide, people began to open up and share their experiences.

We learned that often the most important question you can ask is the one people avoid the most: Are you thinking about killing yourself or have you ever thought about it?

The course is just what it sounds like, CPR for suicide. Our focus was on one thing: life support. We are one available avenue that people have before seeking professional help and our job is to keep the person alive.

To inquire about ASIST at your command, speak with your local Navy chaplain.



Lifelink Spotlight

This month, we recognize Navy Medicine Training Support Center (NMTSC) Coalition of Sailors Against Destructive Decisions (CSADD) chapter, who conducted a talent show in support of suicide prevention on October 28th.

Fourteen service members from the tri-service Medical Education and Training Campus at Joint Base San Antonio performed during the show, singing, dancing, playing musical instruments and even reciting original poetry. Prior to the show's start, materials with stress navigation tips and suicide prevention information were distributed. Between performances, NMTSC Suicide Prevention Coordinator, Chief Hospital Corpsman Sara Stack, and NMTSC Commanding Officer, Capt. Denise Smith, addressed the crowd, imploring students to seek help within and outside of the command. They also emphasized the importance of connecting with those around them.

"A lot of us deal with stress during the day, especially being here," said Stack. "It can be very challenging when we're trying to study and we have personal things going on in our lives."

The winner of the talent competition was Yeoman 3rd Class Anthony Eads, who performed a spoken-word piece. Eads participated in the show because of the cause, to educate others about suicide and build community.

"This is suicide prevention," said Capt. Smith. "We want to make sure we **Ask**, we **Care**, and that we get them to **Treatment**. Don't leave anybody alone. Remember, *Every Sailor, Every Day*. And suicide prevention isn't just one month out of the year—it's 12 months, every day of the month."

*What will you do to promote suicide prevention in your community? 1 Small ACT can make a difference and save a life. You can share your small act with the entire Navy community by personalizing your **1 Small ACT Sign** and sending a photo of yourself with your sign to suicideprevention@navy.mil. Your photo will be posted in the 1 Small ACT Photo Gallery on our [Facebook page](#). Submissions will be accepted through August 31, 2016. For more details, click [here](#). Together, we can be there for Every Sailor, Every Day.*



Resilience Corner

Things Aren't Always What They Appear: Reach Out to Your Friend Today

This article was contributed by the Defense Centers of Excellence for Psychological Health and Traumatic Brain Injury (DCoE) public affairs. To view the content in its original form on the DCoE Blog, click [here](#).

Plato taught us, "Be kind, for everyone you meet is fighting a hard battle." It's not always easy to recognize those who are struggling, particularly in the age of social media when many share only their happiest moments and greatest accomplishments. According to some **studies**, social media can have a negative impact on mental health, increasing anxiety and depression. On the flip side, social media can be a powerful tool to reach out to someone to show that you care, to connect after deployment or relocation and to build community.

Here are five ideas to let others know you care:

Create a message of hope. The Military Crisis Line created an **image and quote generator** to help make it a little easier to create inspiring images to share with friends and family (a tool that is particularly helpful for those less artistically inclined). If you don't want to create an image, head over to the **DCoE page on Pinterest** to share inspirational quotes.

Share heartfelt videos. The **#PowerofOne video** is a moving video created by the Department of Veterans Affairs that shows the impact that one person can have on another. Share it on your social media channels.

"Chat" or direct message. Most social media channels have a way to privately direct-message or chat with another user. A simple, "Hi. How are you?" can go a long way. Stickers and emojis never hurt either. ;-)

Write on your friend's wall or tag him in a post. It can be fun to share an 'On this day' memory or upload a #TBT photo. Sound complicated? A simple note saying you care works too!

See something, say something. If you notice that a friend or family member is posting unusually sad and hopeless comments, images or quotes, or posting them more frequently, let him or her know you care. Reach out through the platform or pick up the phone to call them. If the post seems to suggest that there is imminent danger, immediately call the Military Crisis Line at 800-273-8255 and press one, or dial 911. Facebook also has a feature to **report suicidal content**.

Whether online or offline, **peer support** can make a huge difference in all of our lives. Take a few minutes to reach out to someone you care about today.

*Want more? Participating in the **1 Small ACT Photo Gallery** is a great way to share a message of hope with your community. You may also share the **Every Sailor, Every Day** video to inspire shipmates and loved ones to step up and step in when a Sailor is showing indications of distress or hopelessness.*

News and Resources

Suicide Prevention: We Have the Power and Responsibility to Help

[NavyLive](#)

Behavioral Fitness: Healthy Behaviors to Build Strength

[NavyNavStress](#)

Warrior Care: How to PMCS Yourself to Better Mental Health

[DCoE](#)

Why Helping Civilian Providers Understand Military Culture Matters

[DCoE Blog](#)

From Sailor to Civilian and Back

[All Hands Magazine](#)

Healthy Ways for You to Manage Psychological Health Symptoms

[Real Warriors](#)

DoD Warrior Care Month

Resources [Health.mil](#)

Defining Your Family Traditions

[Military OneSource](#)

Tobacco-Free Living Resources

[NMCPhC](#)

Wounded Warriors, Prince Harry Inspire Each Other

[Health.mil](#)

Confidential Non-medical Counseling Options for Service Members and Their Families

[Military OneSource](#)

Bibliotherapy: Feel Better Through Books

[HPRC](#)

Upcoming Events

Veteran's Day
November 11

Warrior Care Month
November

Military Family Appreciation Month
November

SPC Training Webinars
November 18, 1200 CT
December 10, 1400 CT
[Register Here](#)

Exercise Controllability to Navigate Stress and Keep What You've Earned this Holiday Season

While the holiday season is filled with love, joy and celebrations, it can also bring an increased level of stress and anxiety. With social calendars brimming with holiday parties, family get-togethers and festivities, alcohol may be in abundance. According to the Distilled Spirit Council of the United States, the \$49 billion distilled-spirits industry makes more than 35% of its profits from Thanksgiving to New Year's Day. Whether you're planning on having a few social cocktails or are likely to drink alcohol in response to stress, you can exercise Controllability—one of the **Principles of Resilience**—to drink responsibly and *Keep What You've Earned*.

We've all heard the "stressful day" excuse for having a drink or two too many. While drinking alcohol may lead to positive feelings and relaxation momentarily, attempting to navigate stress through drinking can lead to long term physical and psychological health effects. If you are feeling stressed this holiday season, try turning to healthy habits instead of reaching for a drink or making a "pit stop" after work. Activities such as exercise release endorphins—the body's natural mood-boosters—for a real "happy hour." Yoga, meditation or even taking a brief minute each day to relax and be in the moment can help you de-stress naturally as well.

Got the "holiday blues?" Whether you feel alone amongst all of the holiday activities, are unable to be with your loved ones or are anxious about preparing for the holiday season, having a Stress Navigation Plan is 1 Small ACT that can empower you to thrive during the holidays. This simple tool helps you think about your current practices for navigating stress and identify healthy solutions to avoid engaging in destructive behavior, like abusing alcohol. Your plan is personal and doesn't have to be shared with anyone—keep it in an easily accessible place so that you can find it when you need it most. Download yours from the Navy Suicide Prevention website at www.public.navy.mil/bupers-npc/support/21st_Century_Sailor/suicide_prevention/Documents/Stress%20Navigation%20Plan.pdf.

Instead of bottling up your feelings—or turning to the bottle to relieve stress—talk to a friend, family member, shipmate, DAPA, chaplain, doctor or other professional resource available to you. If drinking to de-stress has become a common practice for you, remember that a self-referral is the best option for seeking help. When Sailors get help via a self-referral or through the help of their command, neither result in disciplinary action. Remember, seeking help is a sign of strength.

When you're out celebrating this holiday season, plan ahead for a safe ride home by ensuring that a shipmate, friend or family member will be your designated driver. You can also give the gift of being a designated driver by downloading the *Keep What the You've Earned* campaign's **printable holiday gift cards** (pictured) and by taking the upcoming responsible drinking pledge. Promoting responsible drinking through Controllability is just 1 Small ACT you can do to stay healthy, lead by example and be there for *Every Sailor, Every Day*.

As the holiday season gets underway, be on the lookout for our upcoming "21 Days of Total Sailor Fitmas" by subscribing to our NavyNavStress blog at navstress.wordpress.com. For more information and year-round resilience resources, follow us on Twitter (@NavStress) and like us on Facebook at www.facebook.com/navstress!

